



NEWS RELEASE

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NEBRASKA'S 2015 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES CONTINUE TO OUTSCORE PEERS ON ACT EXAM

Ed Chief Blomstedt: Breakdown of ACT scores shows need to address equity of access to educational opportunities and need to increase focus on closing the achievement gap among groups of students.

Nebraska's 2015 high school graduates continued the state's tradition of students outscoring their peers nationally on the ACT college entrance exam that measures college readiness in English, reading, mathematics and science.

Nebraska's average 2015 ACT composite score of 21.5 was higher than the national average of 21.0, but slightly lower from the previous year's average score of 21.7. The national average was unchanged in 2015. The highest possible ACT score is 36.

Of the 17 states with 80 percent or more graduates taking the ACT, Nebraska continued to score at the top. This is significant since states that test a high percentage of graduates tend to have lower averages since the scores include more students who are not planning to attend college and not on the college course-taking track. In Nebraska, 88 percent or 18,347 graduates took the 2015 ACT. Nationally, 1.9 million graduates or 59 percent took the ACT.

That 88 percent is an increase from last year when 86 percent or 17,768 took the ACT. From 2010-2015, the percentage of ACT test-takers in Nebraska has increased by 12 percent.

"Historically, Nebraska has a high percentage of ACT test-takers and our graduates have scored high, compared to the nation. As a state, we should applaud our successes but then recognize that we can do better," Nebraska Education Commissioner Matt Blomstedt said. "We can improve access to the educational opportunities that our schools offer students

statewide. And, we can improve our focus on closing the achievement gaps among groups of students.

“We are positioned under the new state accountability system, AQuESTT, to address these important issues beginning this year as schools and districts evaluate and build on their programs and initiatives to strengthen our school improvement system,” Blomstedt said. AQuESTT — Accountability for a Quality Education System, Today and Tomorrow — is Nebraska’s new state accountability system.

“Providing and ensuring equitable access to educational opportunities under AQuESTT will help us meet our state goals of expanded educational opportunities and success for all student groups,” Blomstedt said.

ACT Student Composite Scores by Race and Ethnicity:

Graduate Groups - Nebraska	2013	2014	2015
All Students	21.5	21.7	21.5
Black/African American	17.1	17.3	17.3
American Indian/Alaska Native	17.4	18.2	17.5
White	22.4	22.5	22.4
Hispanic/Latino	18.2	18.6	18.4
Asian	21.7	21.3	21.4
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	19.5	19.6	19.5
Two or more races	20.4	20.9	21.0
Prefer not to respond/No response	20.0	20.9	20.8

The Condition of College & Career Readiness report also showed Nebraska high school graduates scored higher than graduates in other states in each subject used to determine college and career readiness:

- 69 percent of Nebraska graduates met the English goal, compared to 64 percent nationally.
- 49 percent of Nebraska test takers met the reading goal, compared to 46 percent nationally.
- 44 percent of Nebraska graduates met the mathematics benchmark, compared to 42 percent nationally.
- 42 percent of Nebraska graduates tested ready in science, compared to 38 percent nationally.

Detailed information on the 2015 college readiness benchmark percentages showed that English results dropped 3 percent; reading increased 1 point, the mathematics benchmark dropped 1 point and science was unchanged.

For more information, go to www.act.org.